

Environmental Front

Compiled by Cynthia Houston

Army Stewardship Reflected in Earth Day

FOR the Army, fighting and winning hinge on being equipped, trained and ready, and on having the resources to support those objectives.

And the resources are more than state-of-the-art weapons and "sandbox" exercises. A critical, indispensable resource is land on which to train and hone skills needed to use state-of-the-art weapons to their full capacities, plan and execute battle strategies, and organize and launch an attack.

Yet, the Army is "losing" its land. Years of live-firing weapons and driving tanks across training sites have taken their toll on the environment. Also, once-isolated posts now border civilian communities, and public outcry about noise and potential pollution limit the training that can take place.

As the Army proceeds toward its 21st-century transformation, it will need more land, not less.

That's why, since 1995, the

Army has celebrated Earth Day. The annual Earth Day observance gives soldiers and civilians living and working on Army installations an opportunity to concentrate on the critical role the environment plays in supporting the broad spectrum of Army missions.

Earth Day is a time to renew promises to be responsible stewards of natural resources, and to share information about actions the Army is taking to sustain land entrusted to its care.

Some installations are planning weeklong activities to commemorate Earth Day 2002, which this year falls on Monday, April 22. Following are event ideas provided by Army installations in the United States and abroad last year:

- Invite local automobile dealers to bring environmentally friendly new car models to your event.
- Conduct a recycle fair.
- Link Earth Day events to other events in the community.
- Plant more than a tree — plant a riparian forest buffer of selected vegetation that protects and replenishes the waters in nearby streams and rivers.
- Hold a workshop concerning environmental issues that threaten readability

ness at your installation.

- Plan environmental-project milestones to coincide with Earth Day for maximum "good news story" impact.

The U.S. Army Environmental Center provides information and planning materials for Earth Day activities at your installation. Visit USAEC online at <http://aec.army.mil> for ideas, downloadable resources and order forms for this year's Army Earth Day poster. You may also contact the Army Earth Day program manager, Deborah Elliott, at (410) 436-1272, or (DSN) 584-1272. Her e-mail address is deborah.elliott@aec.apgea.army.mil. — Deborah Elliott, Army Earth Day Coordinator

Unit Earns "Super Trash Can" Title

THE Combat Equipment Battalion, Luxembourg, has earned a prestigious environmental certificate with an amusing name. The *Superdreckskescht* — which means "Super Trash Can" — has certified CEB-LU and its contract service partner, Warehouse Services Agency.

The Super Trash Can certification program is the product of a partnership between the government of Luxembourg and waste-disposal companies, and is awarded by the Luxembourg Ministry for the Environment and the Chamber for Professions.

The list of criteria for the

The Army is helping to preserve the quality of life on Earth by doing its part to protect natural resources.



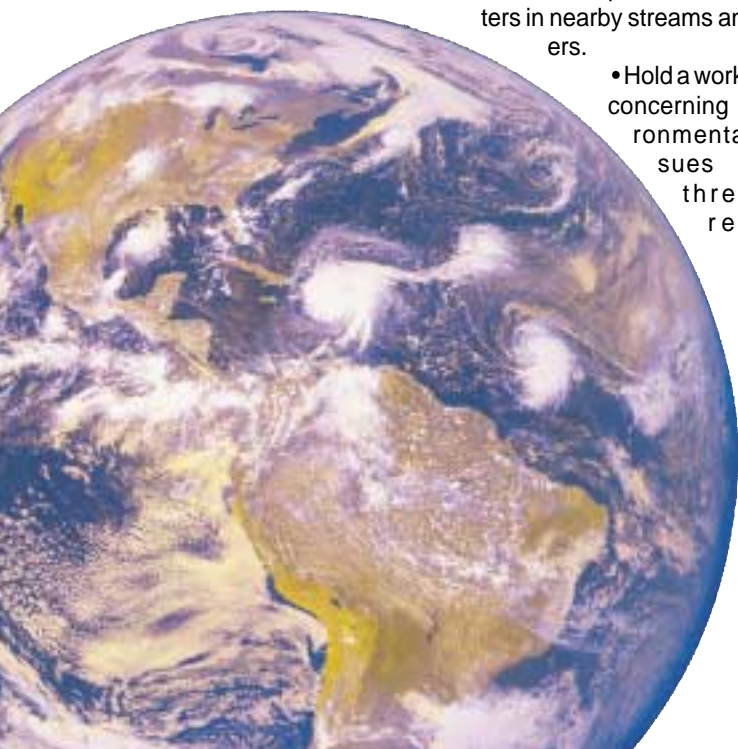
The U.S. Army Combat Equipment Battalion, Luxembourg now uses this "Super Trash Can" logo to indicate certification by the Superdreckskescht.

Super Trash Can certification is extensive and includes items such as employee motivation, safe and environmentally sound storage, clear sorting, and proper reuse and disposal of waste.

MAJ Howard Christie, support operations officer for CEB-LU, said that the successful certification resulted from the close partnership between CEB-LU and Warehouse Services Agency. "Keeping Army pre-positioned equipment and materiel in combat-ready condition generates a lot of waste," he said. "So we welcomed the challenge of earning the certificate." — Operations Support Command

MRE Heaters Pose Compliance Challenge

EVERY Meal Ready to Eat has one. It's a good bet that a soldier



spending a day or longer on an Army range is carrying a flameless ration heater; the Army issues millions every year.

Concerns arise, however, when soldiers throw unused heaters in with "regular" trash. Most environmental regulators view discarded, unused FRHs as reactive hazardous waste, since they contain compounds that heat up when activated by water.

The Environmental Protection Agency listed discarded unused heaters as "reactive," both in a May 1999 letter to the Soldier Systems Center in Natick, Mass., and in a recent notice of violation at a large troop installation in the South. An incident in which inactivated FRHs turned up in a trash shipment from the installation to a landfill sparked that notice.

Installations where flameless ration heaters are used must establish procedures to ensure unused heaters aren't thrown out with the regular trash, said Robert Shakeshaft, hazardous waste media manager for the U.S. Army Environmental Center. This is especially important during training exercises, when a large number of unused heaters might be discarded.

Used heaters don't pose the same hazards. At the end of the heating cycle, only inert substances remain, mainly cardboard, a polyethylene bag and magnesium hydroxide. These have no adverse impacts on human health or the environment and can be placed in any landfill.

To manage unused FRHs, Army installations have several options, each beginning with an ironclad collection method. The unspent heaters can be turned in to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office for reuse, transfer, dona-

tion or sales; sold through a qualified recycling program, returned to the manufacturer, activated according to local hazardous waste generator regulations, or disposed of as hazardous waste in a permitted facility, Shakeshaft said.

Meanwhile, the Soldier Systems Center is working on a long-term solution to the FRH challenge. The center, which is part of the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., is developing two new ration heaters that don't release a flammable gas. These



Flameless ration heaters could be classified as hazardous waste if not used to heat food. Used heaters, however, can be placed in any landfill.

devices are now going through rigorous health-risk and regulatory assessments to ensure they'll comply with future envi-

ronmental standards.

Both heaters performed well during an August 2000 field evaluation at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. Soldiers found them as acceptable as current FRHs. The manufacturers and SBBCOM continue to work on weight, cost, performance and mass-production issues. The command will report on its analysis of these issues, as well as the new FRH's compliance with environmental regulations, to a board of joint service representatives in fiscal 2002.

In the near term, an instruction label on new FRHs will advise soldiers not to place unused heaters in the trash.

For more information, contact the USAEC Compliance Branch at (410) 436-7069, or e-mail the agency at compliance@aec.apgea.army.mil. — U.S. Army Environmental Center



Environmental Sharp Shooters

MILITARY and civilian photographers will be recognized for their achievements in support of the Army's environmental program in the April edition of *Soldiers*. Check out this special "Environmental Sharp Shooters" feature to see what's going on at the Army's Environmental Front.

Please send your contributions or questions to Cynthia Houston, National Outreach Team Leader, U.S. Army Environmental Center, 5179 Hoadley Road, Attn.: SFIM-AEC-PA, Bldg. 4415, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21010-5401, or e-mail Environmental.Front@aec.apgea.army.mil. Houston can be reached by phone at (410) 436-1270 or (DSN) 584-1270.